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50
JUNE

DIGITAL
EDITION

SPAWN



McFARLANE

image® COMICS PRESENTS:

"CHOICES"



story

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Dedicated to my family:

**WANDA, CYAN AND
KATE**

Spawn #49 Summary:

Al confides in Granny Blake his fear for her safety if he continues to visit her but, his concern is met with a gentle sermon. When Cogliostro breaks into Spawn's personal asylum, he discovers that the costume is beginning to possess him. Cogliostro, showing no fear, is swallowed and vomited by the cape. Able to free Al from the evil cape's grip, Cog admonishes him to harness its power. Finally, Al humbly asks Cog for help. Terry visits the doctor who orders routine tests. Preoccupied with his pending test results and the reconstruction of Wynn's murder conspiracy against him, Terry blacks out on the drive home, becomes involved in a serious accident and ends up in the hospital. Wanda receives the phone call about Terry's accident and rushes to the hospital. Cygor lurks in the New York City concrete jungle looking for Simmons. On edge since the mysterious file was slipped under their door and feeling the financial pressure of starting their new business, Twitch pulls his gun when the car blows a rod. Sam calms the apologetic Twitch down and says he has a little surprise for him.

FOR IMAGE COMICS
LARRY MARDER - exec. director

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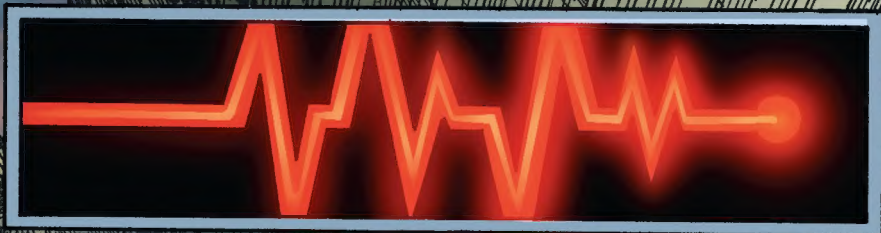
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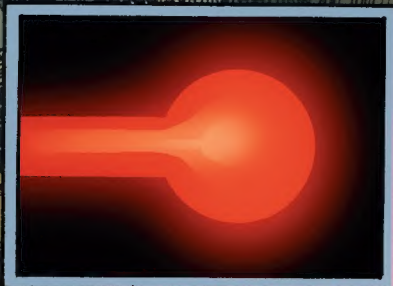
AT FIRST, HE THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE COLD. SOON IT DEVELOPED INTO SEVERE HACKING. NEITHER SEEMED OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

WHY WOULD THEY?

THEN CAME DIZZINESS, FOLLOWED BY A FAINTING SPELL. THAT'S WHEN HE STARTED TO GET ANXIOUS.



HIS FAMILY DOCTOR SENT HIM TO A SPECIALIST. THAT WAS A WEEK AGO. NO ONE KNEW. NOT HIS EMPLOYER, HIS FRIENDS OR HIS OWN FAMILY.



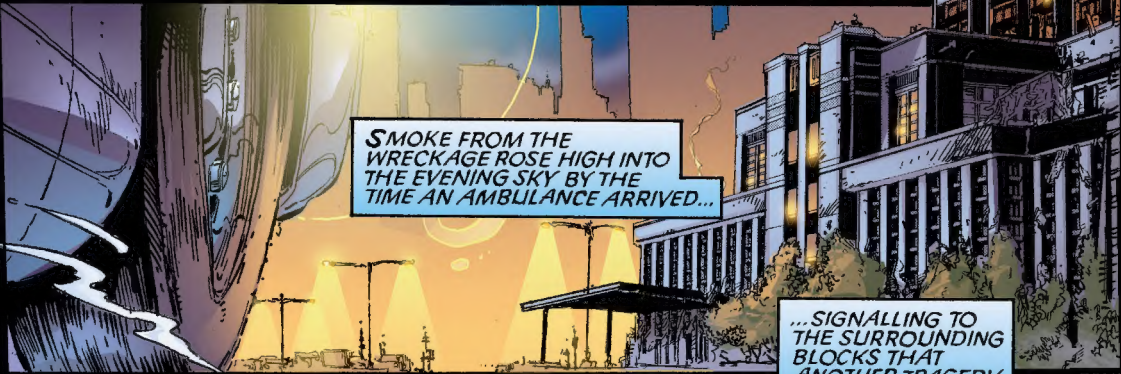
ON HIS DRIVE HOME TONIGHT, TERRY FITZGERALD EXPERIENCED HIS SECOND BLACKOUT. HE WAS AT HIS DESK FOR THE FIRST ONE.

THIS TIME HE WASN'T AS LUCKY.

IT WAS TRAVELLING AT 40 MILES PER HOUR WHEN THE ONCOMING TRUCK TRIED TO BRAKE. THERE WASN'T TIME.

THE DELIVERY TRUCK COLLIDED WITH TERRY.

HEAD ON.



SMOKE FROM THE
WRECKAGE ROSE HIGH INTO
THE EVENING SKY BY THE
TIME AN AMBULANCE ARRIVED...

...SIGNALLING TO
THE SURROUNDING
BLOCKS THAT
ANOTHER TRAGEDY
OF MAN'S MAKING
HAD OCCURRED.

SLAM!

NURSE!!

A PEDESTRIAN
FOUND HIS
WALLET A
COUPLE OF
YARDS FROM
THE CAR.

IT GAVE POLICE A
NAME THEY COULD
TRACK. WITHIN
MINUTES THEY
HAD A LIST OF
NUMBERS TO CALL.

I'VE GOT A
NECK FRACTURE
WITH MULTIPLE
CONFUSIONS ON
THE CHEST AND
LEGS. HEARTBEAT
IS STABLE AT 72,
BLOOD PRESSURE
120 OVER 80.

HIS LOVED
ONES WOULD
NEED TO KNOW.

WANDA...

ESPECIALLY
HIS WIFE.

SHE KNEW SOME-
THING WAS
TERRIBLY WRONG
THE MOMENT
SHE RECEIVED
THE CALL.

"GET TO THE HOSPITAL."
THAT'S ALL SHE
NEEDED TO HEAR.

SCREECH



AFTER LEAVING CYAN, HER
DAUGHTER, WITH THE
NEIGHBORS, SHE RACED
FRANTICALLY TO ST. LUKE'S
MEDICAL CENTER.

THOUGH SHE DROVE
COURTEOUSLY, A
DOZEN LAWS WERE
BROKEN.

SHE
DIDN'T CARE.

MISS?
MISS?!
MAY I
HELP
YOU?

YES.

THEY BROUGHT
MY HUSBAND IN,
TERRY FITZGERALD.
ABOUT TWENTY
MINUTES AGO. HE'D
BEEN IN A CAR
ACCIDENT.

IS HE
DOWN
THIS
HALL?

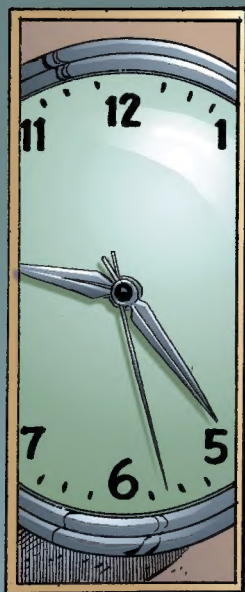
LET ME
CHECK
FOR YOU.

A QUICK
CALL
LATER...

SECOND
FLOOR. HE'S
STILL IN X-RAY--
WON'T BE OUT
FOR ANOTHER
HALF HOUR.
YOU CAN...

SHE
DOESN'T
NEED TO
HEAR ANY
MORE.

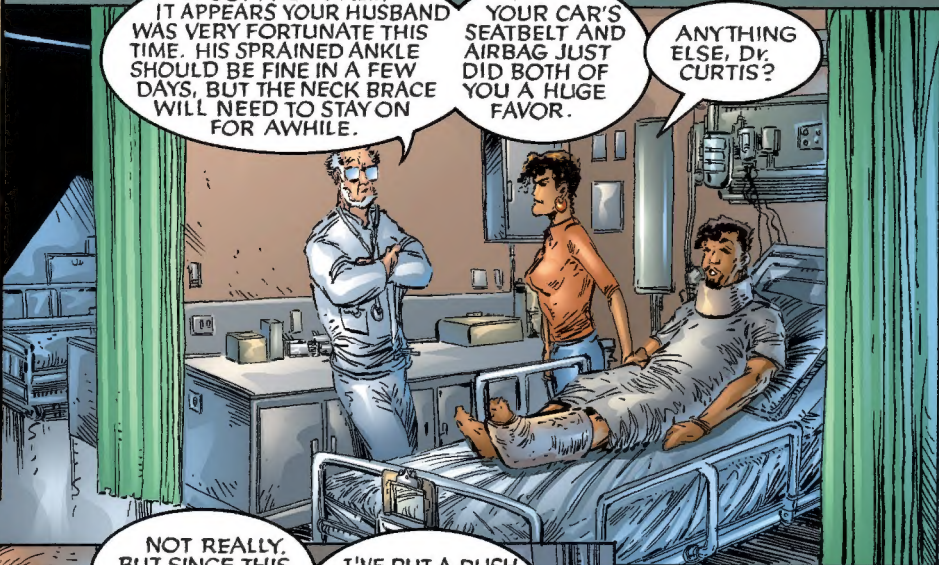




... SO, ALL IN ALL, IT APPEARS YOUR HUSBAND WAS VERY FORTUNATE THIS TIME. HIS SPRAINED ANKLE SHOULD BE FINE IN A FEW DAYS, BUT THE NECK BRACE WILL NEED TO STAY ON FOR AWHILE.

YOUR CAR'S SEATBELT AND AIRBAG JUST DID BOTH OF YOU A HUGE FAVOR.

ANYTHING ELSE, DR. CURTIS?



NOT REALLY, BUT SINCE THIS IS HIS SECOND BLACKOUT

SECOND?

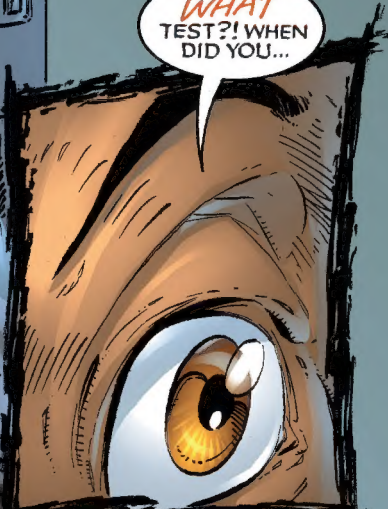
... I'VE PUT A RUSH REQUEST ON THE RESULTS OF THAT C.A.T SCAN DR. ROLLINS DID LAST WEEK.*

WHAT
TEST?! WHEN DID YOU...



*ISSUE 49.--Tomv

OH-
ok.



HEE HEE...
UM, YOU SEE, WANDA, I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GET WORRIED ABOUT A LITTLE TESTING.

I'M A DEAD DUCK.



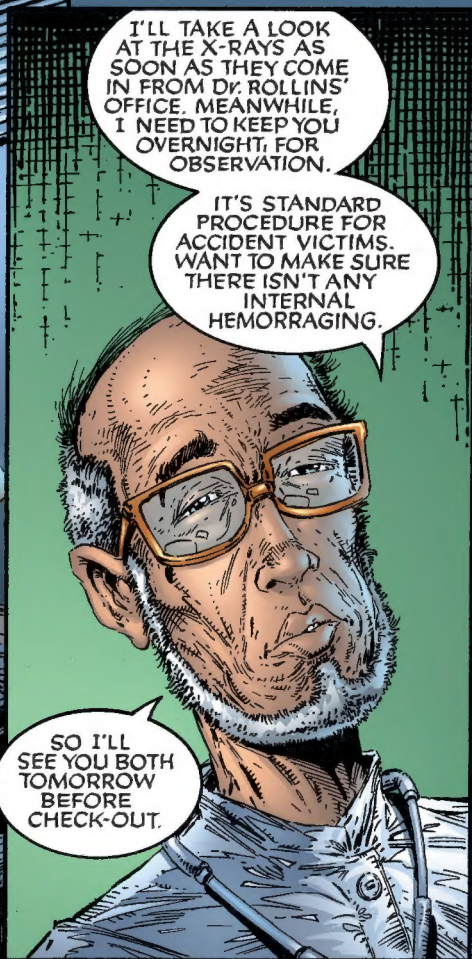
YOU KNOW ME. ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR BEST INTERESTS. I KNOW HOW KOOKY YOU CAN GET.



WOOFY!?

Uhm, EXCUSE ME, FOLKS, I DIDN'T MEAN TO START ANYTHING.

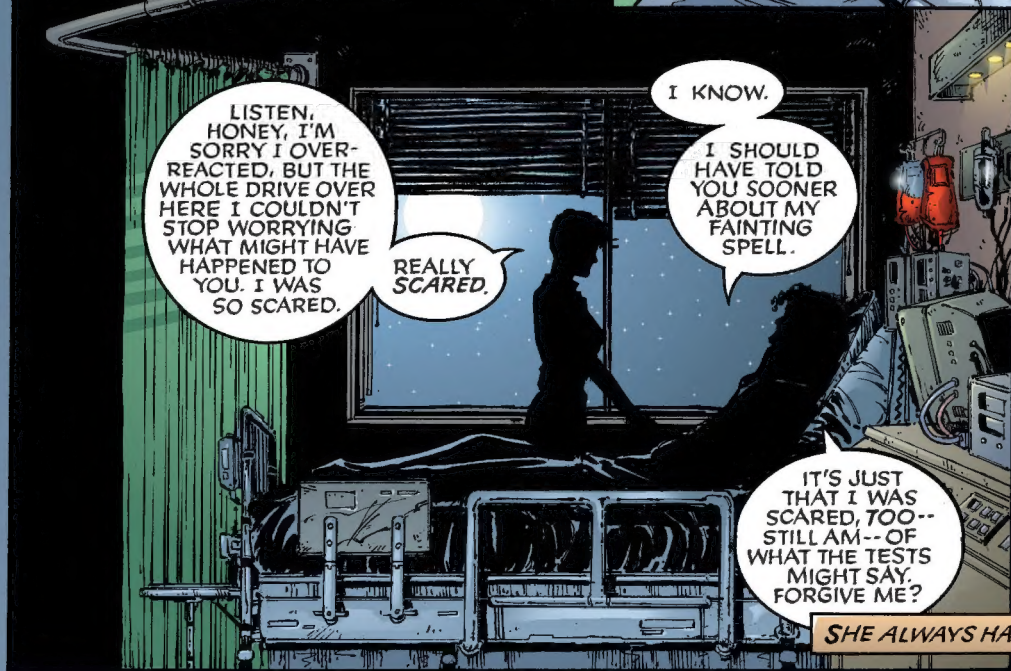
WHAT'S IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW IS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY THE BLACKOUTS ARE HAPPENING.



I'LL TAKE A LOOK AT THE X-RAYS AS SOON AS THEY COME IN FROM DR. ROLLINS' OFFICE. MEANWHILE, I NEED TO KEEP YOU OVERNIGHT, FOR OBSERVATION.

IT'S STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR ACCIDENT VICTIMS. WANT TO MAKE SURE THERE ISN'T ANY INTERNAL HEMORRAGING.

SO I'LL SEE YOU BOTH TOMORROW BEFORE CHECK-OUT.



LISTEN, HONEY, I'M SORRY I OVER-REACTED, BUT THE WHOLE DRIVE OVER HERE I COULDN'T STOP WORRYING WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU. I WAS SO SCARED.

REALLY SCARED.

I KNOW.

I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU SOONER ABOUT MY FAINTING SPELL.

IT'S JUST THAT I WAS SCARED, TOO-- STILL AM-- OF WHAT THE TESTS MIGHT SAY. FORGIVE ME?

SHE ALWAYS HAS.

SOMEWHERE
IN THE
SHADOWS...

YOUR RECENT
SEPARATION FROM
THE SYMBIOTE HAS
ACCELERATED ITS
EVOLUTION, WITHOUT
ANY GUIDANCE FROM
YOU. THIS IS A VERY
SERIOUS PROBLEM.

YOU SEE, RIGHT
NOW THE COSTUME
IS RUNNING IN ALL
DIRECTIONS AT ONCE.
IT'S LOST. AND, LIKE
ANYTHING ELSE THAT
BECOMES LOST IT
WANTS TO RETURN
HOME.


TO
HELL.

PRECISELY.
AND SINCE YOU'RE
ATTACHED TO IT,
YOU'RE GOING ALONG
FOR THE RIDE.

IT'S RECON-
FIGURING ITSELF
AT A TREMENDOUS
RATE. USUALLY, THE
METAMORPHOSIS
TAKES YEARS TO
COMPLETE.

AND THAT'S
ONLY IF THE
COSTUME AND
ITS HOST ARE IN
SYNC... WHICH
YOU TWO
DEFINATELY
AREN'T.

SO
WHAT
CAN I
DO?



DON'T TRIGGER
IT. IT FEEDS OFF
YOU-- YOUR EVIL.
WHEN IT CAN'T DRAIN
FROM YOU, THE
WORMS BECOME
THE CATALYST.

SO
NOW I'M
MADE OF
EVIL.

NOT
EXACTLY,
AL.

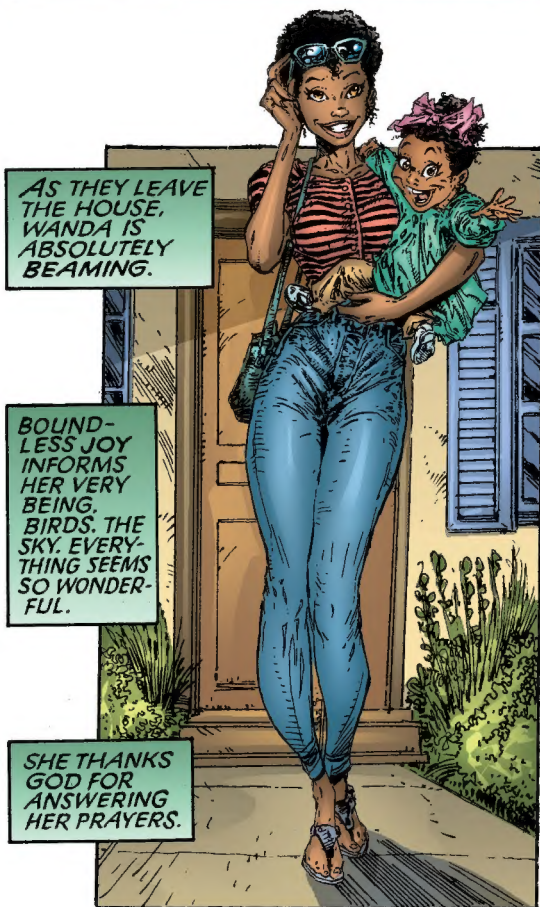
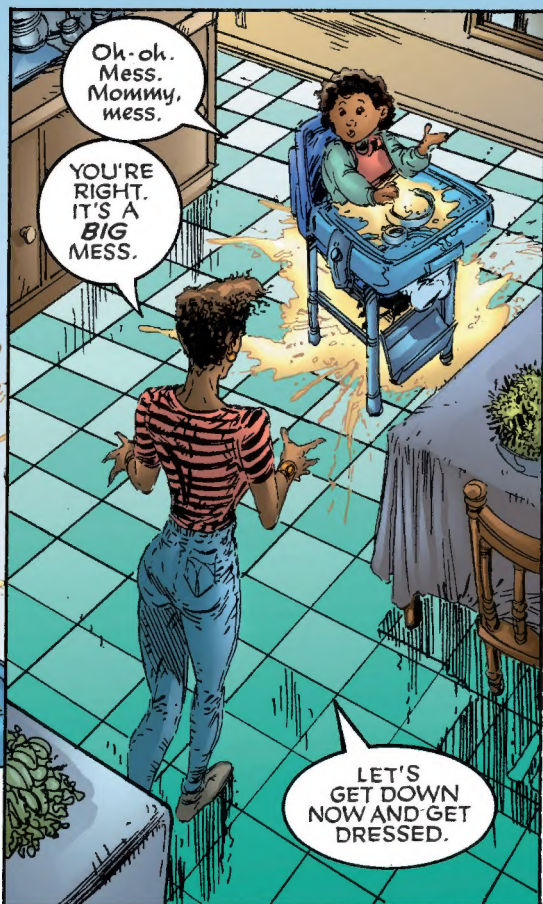
BUT YOUR ANGER,
EVIL AND SIN COME IN
MANY FORMS, YET ANGER
IS THE ULTIMATE PIPELINE.
NOTHING GOOD HAS EVER
COME FROM RAGE. YOU'VE
BEEN MAD SINCE YOUR
REBIRTH-- ALMOST
CONSTANTLY. THAT'S
WHAT'S FEEDING IT.

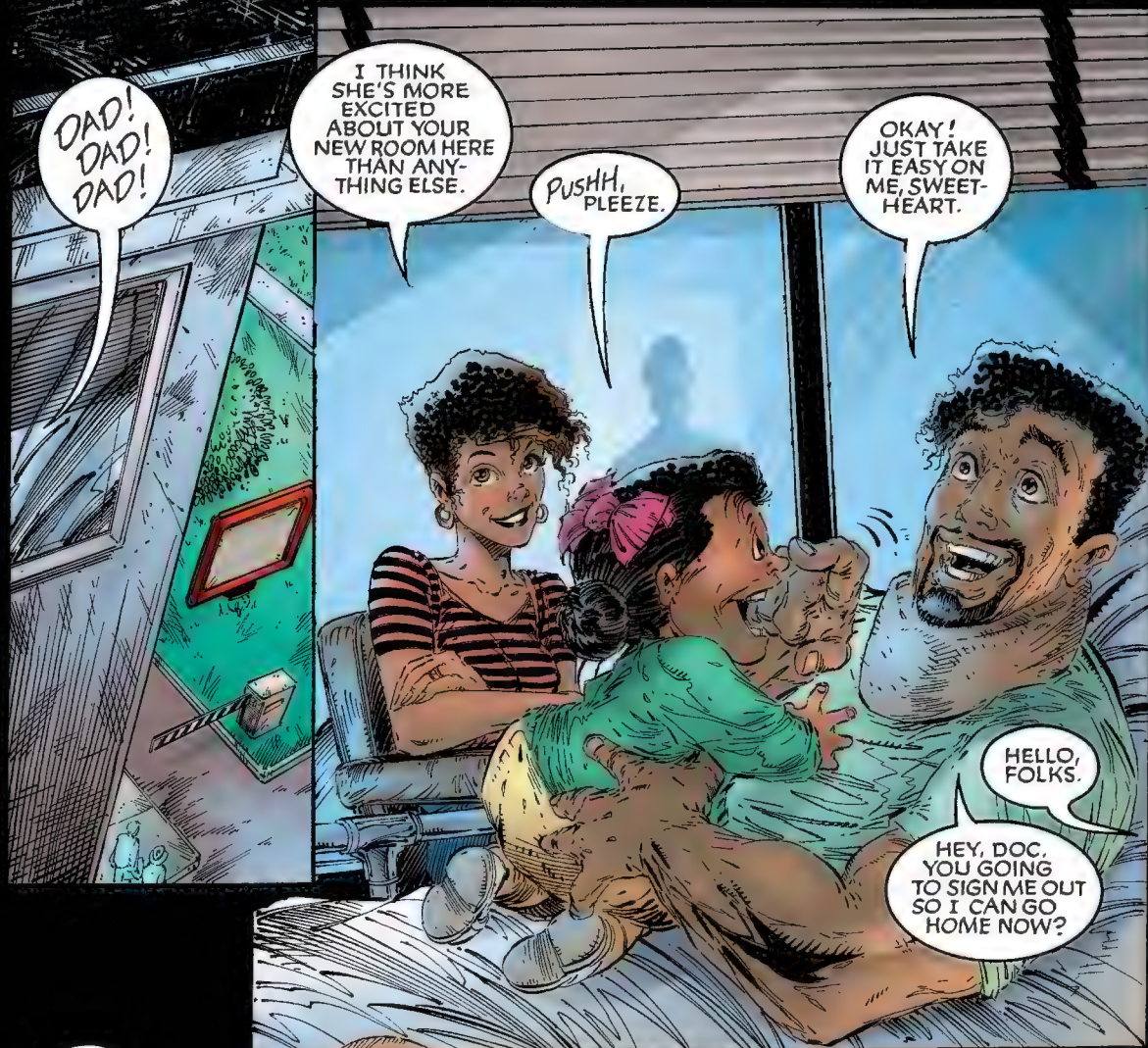
YOU HAVE TO
LET IT GO. WHAT-
EVER IS FESTERING
INSIDE YOU.
LET IT GO!
PLEASE, FOR ALL
OF US-- FIND SOME
INNER PEACE.
JUST LET THE
ANGER
DIE.

BEFORE
YOU LEAVE,
COG, I HAVE
TO KNOW SOME-
THING. WHO
ARE YOU?

A REFLECTION
OF YOU. WE'RE THE
SAME, AL. WE BOTH
USED TO BE REAL,
A LIFETIME AGO.

IN SHORT...
I'M A
SPAWN.





DAD!
DAD!
DAD!

I THINK
SHE'S MORE
EXCITED
ABOUT YOUR
NEW ROOM HERE
THAN ANY-
THING ELSE.

PUSHH,
PLEEZE.

OKAY!
JUST TAKE
IT EASY ON
ME, SWEET-
HEART.

HELLO,
FOLKS.

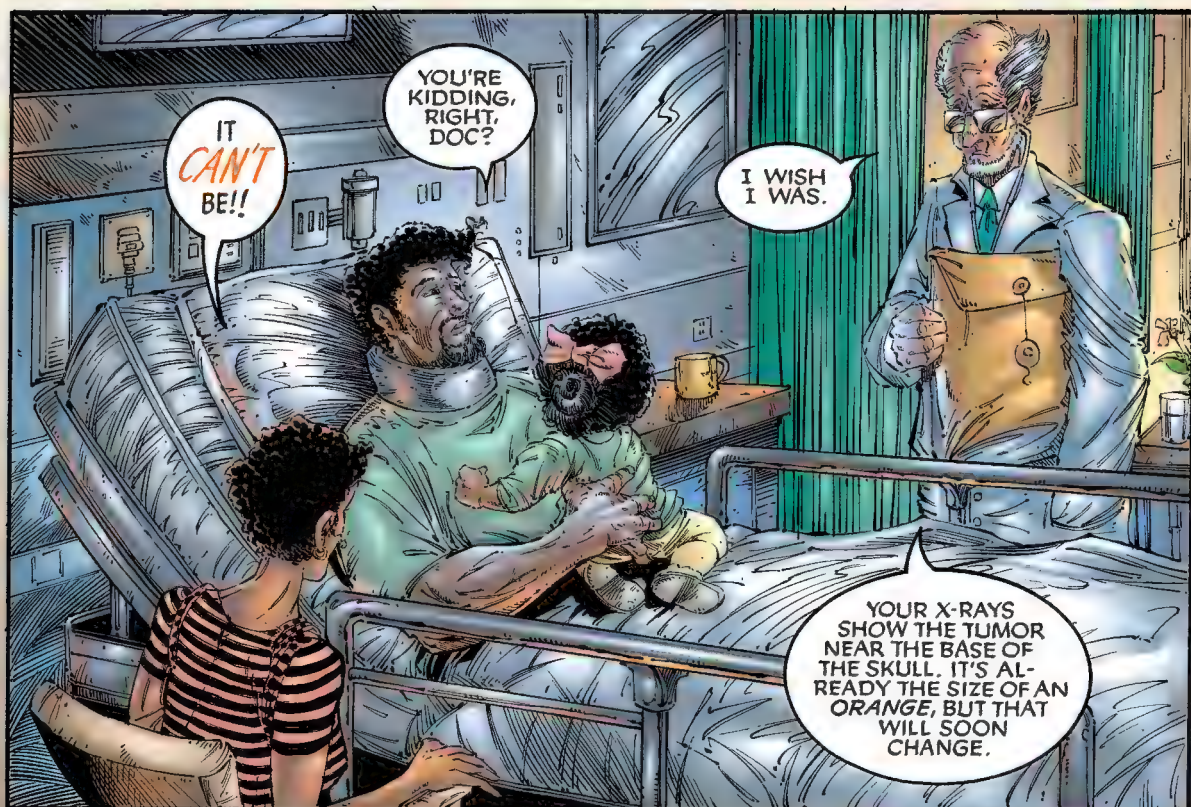
HEY, DOC.
YOU GOING
TO SIGN ME OUT
SO I CAN GO
HOME NOW?

I'M
AFRAID
NOT,
TERRY.

WE HAVE A
PROBLEM. A VERY
SERIOUS ONE. YOUR
TEST RESULTS CAME
IN FROM DR. ROLLINS'
OFFICE. THE SCANS
INDICATE A
RATHER LARGE
GROWTH ON YOUR
BRAIN.

IT'S A
CANCEROUS
TUMOR.

207

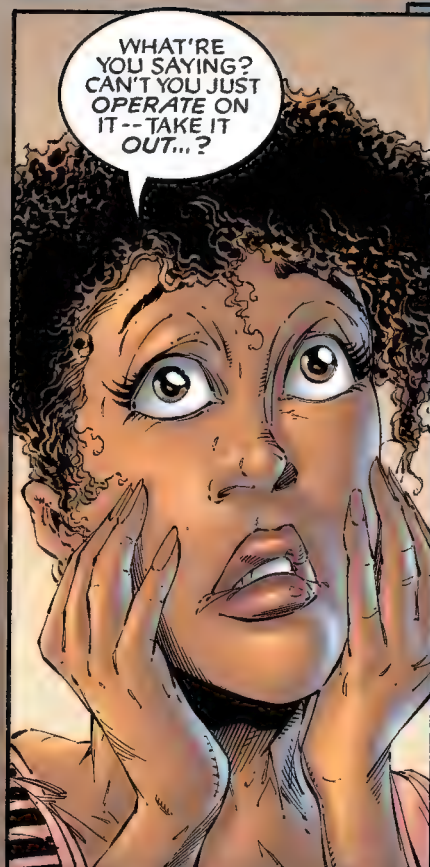


IT
CAN'T
BE!!

YOU'RE
KIDDING,
RIGHT,
DOC?

I WISH
I WAS.

YOUR X-RAYS
SHOW THE TUMOR
NEAR THE BASE OF
THE SKULL. IT'S AL-
READY THE SIZE OF AN
ORANGE, BUT THAT
WILL SOON
CHANGE.

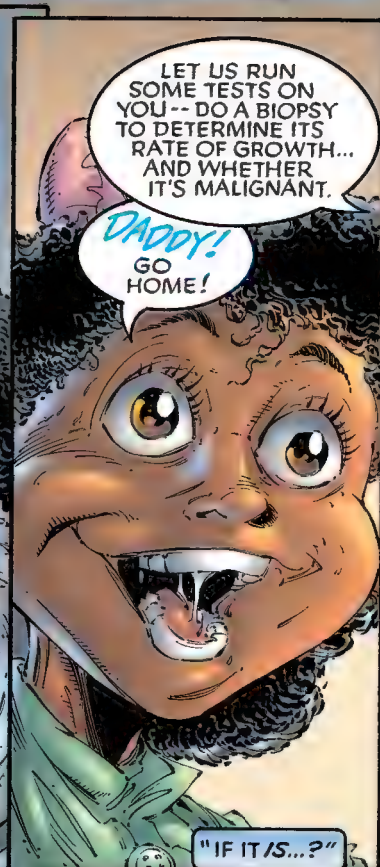


WHAT'RE
YOU SAYING?
CAN'T YOU JUST
OPERATE ON
IT-- TAKE IT
OUT...?



THAT'S
WHAT WE'RE TRYING
TO DETERMINE. UNFOR-
TUNATELY, IT'S SHOWN UP
IN AN AREA THAT USUALLY
INDICATES AN ATTACHMENT.
IF THE TUMOR IS *MALIG-*
NANT, DAMAGE TO
THE BRAIN WOULD OCCUR
IF WE WERE TO
OPERATE.

SO, WHAT
ARE MY
OPTIONS?



LET US RUN
SOME TESTS ON
YOU -- DO A BIOPSY
TO DETERMINE ITS
RATE OF GROWTH...
AND WHETHER
IT'S *MALIGNANT*.

DADDY!
GO
HOME!

"IF IT'S...?"

"WE'LL
DEAL WITH
THAT LATER."

TWENTY HOURS
AND A BATTERY
OF TESTS LATER...

YOU SEE
THIS CLOUDY
AREA-- IT
REPRESENTS
THE CANCER.

WHEN YOU
HAD YOUR COLD,
A *VIRUS* ENTERED
YOUR SYSTEM. USUALLY,
THE BODY COMBATS A
VIRUS WITH A NUMBER
OF DIFFERENT
DEFENSES.

BUT AS YOUR
COLD GOT WORSE,
IT DEVELOPED INTO
AN EARLY STAGE OF
PNEUMONIA. AS THE
VIRUS GREW STRONGER,
IT TRIGGERED THE
LATENT CELLS OF
THE *CANCER*
TO GROW.

MEANING
YOU'VE ALWAYS
HAD THIS IN YOU,
JUST IN A DORMANT
STATE. YOU, LIKE
MILLIONS OF OTHERS,
WERE PROBABLY
BORN WITH IT.

UNFORTUNATELY,
ITS POSITIONING
MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE
FOR US TO OPERATE.
TO REMOVE IT *ALL*, I'D
HAVE TO REMOVE PART
OF THE BRAIN, *TOO*.
THIS IS COMPOUND-
ED BY THE FACT THAT
THE TUMOR IS
MALIGNANT.

MALIGNANT.

TERRY
SQUEEZES
WANDA
EVEN
HARDER.

SO IT'D JUST
GROW BACK, EVEN
IF YOU *COULD*
REMOVE IT.

YES.

MEANING
I'M GOING TO
DIE. ISN'T THAT
RIGHT, DOCTOR?
H-HOW MUCH
TIME DO I
HAVE?

AT ITS
CURRENT RATE
OF GROWTH, ABOUT
TWO MONTHS, BUT
THERE IS A SERIES OF
PROCEDURES THAT
CAN SLOW THE
SPREAD OF IT.

WHILE ARRANGING FOR CYAN TO STAY WITH CLOSE FRIENDS WANDA TELLS THEM ONLY THAT SHE NEEDS SOME TIME ALONE TO SORT THINGS OUT.

HER FRIENDS PRY NO FURTHER AS SHE MUSTERS A WEAK SMILE, SAYING SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT, BEFORE LEAVING.

HER GUARD GOES DOWN THE MOMENT SHE ARRIVES HOME.

SO DOES SHE.

DAYS LATER...

GRANNIE?

AL? YOU BACK SO SOON? I THOUGHT YOU WOULD. NOW COME INTO THE LIGHT SO I CAN SEE YOU BETTER.

SEE?! BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE--

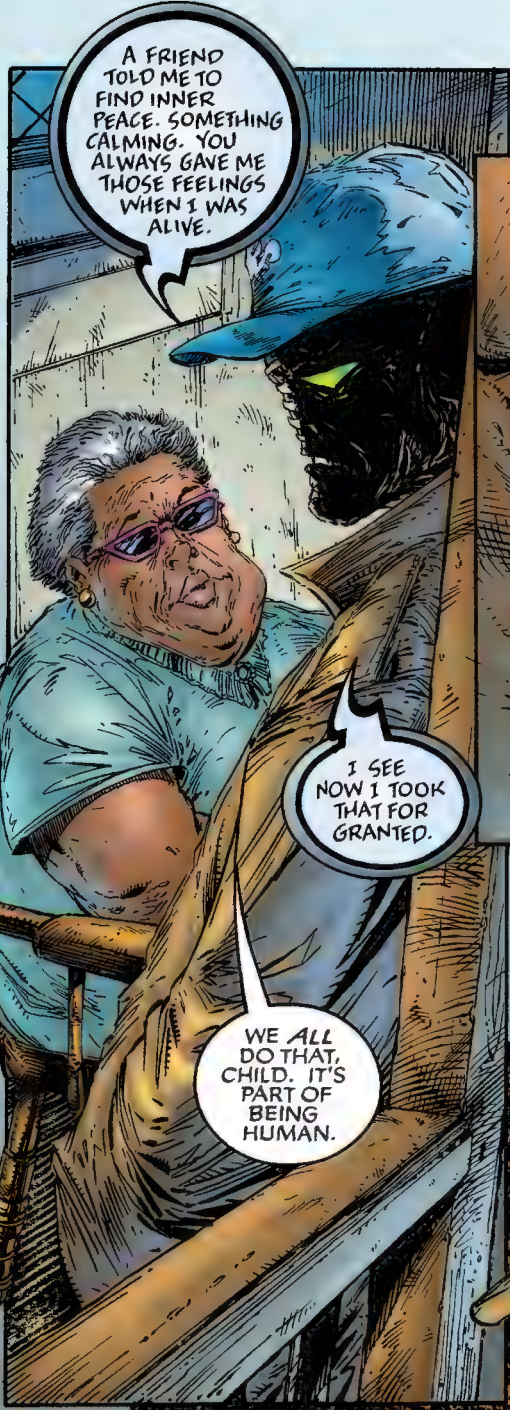
BLIND? I AM. IT WAS JUST A JOKE, AL. YOU'VE BECOME SO SERIOUS SINCE YOU MOVED TO HEAVEN. REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO MAKE ME LAUGH?

I DO.

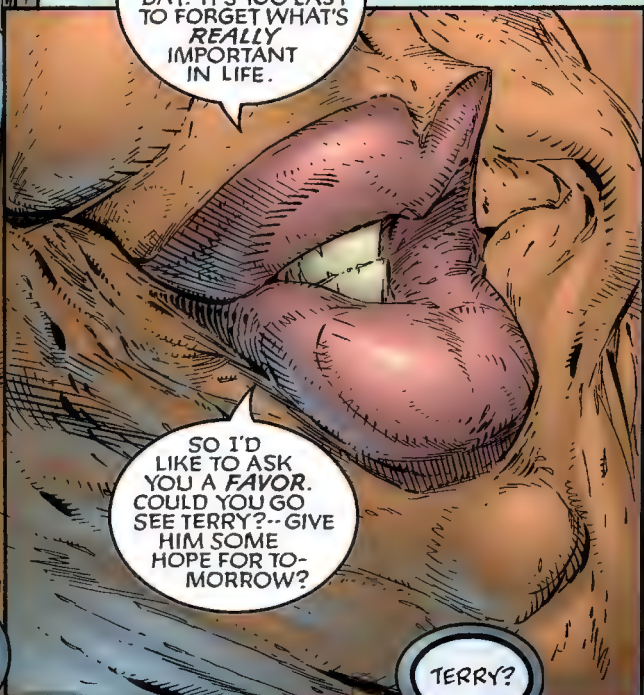
I MISS THAT PART OF YOU. WHY HAS THAT DIS-APPEARED?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT THAT'S PART OF WHY I'M HERE.

LAST ISSUE--TOM



A FRIEND
TOLD ME TO
FIND INNER
PEACE. SOMETHING
CALMING. YOU
ALWAYS GAVE ME
THOSE FEELINGS
WHEN I WAS
ALIVE.




IF I CAN
HELP BRING
YOUR LAUGHTER,
IT'D MAKE MY
DAY. IT'S TOO EASY
TO FORGET WHAT'S
REALLY
IMPORTANT
IN LIFE.

SO I'D
LIKE TO ASK
YOU A FAVOR.
COULD YOU GO
SEE TERRY?-- GIVE
HIM SOME
HOPE FOR TO-
MORROW?

I SEE
NOW I TOOK
THAT FOR
GRANTED.

TERRY?

WE **ALL**
DO THAT,
CHILD. IT'S
PART OF
BEING
HUMAN.



YEAH.
THINGS HAVE
REALLY BEEN TOUGH
ON HIM AND WANDA
SINCE HE GOT SICK.
THE DOCTORS
SAY...

...ok,
LISTEN
TO ME.

YOU'RE
AN **ANGEL**.
YOU PROBABLY
ALREADY KNOW
WHY HE'S
DYING.

WHAT
DID YOU
SAY?

LATER THAT
WEEK...

THE DOCTORS
SAY YOUR
MEDICATION IS
HELPING CONTROL
THE SWELLING A
BIT. ISN'T THAT
GREAT?

SURE.

BUT THE SIDE
EFFECTS ARE SCREWING
UP THE *REST* OF YOUR BODY.
YOU HAVE TO *FIGHT* IT, BABY.
DON'T GIVE IN. NOT NOW.
I NEED YOU TOO MUCH.
SO DOES CYAN.

TELL CYAN I MISS
HER. I LOVE HER--AND
YOU. MAYBE IF I'D BEEN
A BETTER HUSBAND
NONE OF THIS
WOULD--

HUSH!

YOU DIDN'T
HAVE CONTROL
OVER THIS. IT
ISN'T YOUR
FAULT.

WANDA STAYS AT
HIS BEDSIDE AS
MUCH AS SHE CAN,
TRYING TO KEEP
HIS SPIRITS UP
WITH EACH VISIT.
MANY TIMES THE
NURSES JUST LET
HER STAY THROUGH
THE NIGHT.

EXHAUSTED
THIS NIGHT
AS WELL,
SHE SLEEPS,
UNAWARE OF
THE SENTINEL
BESIDE HER.

TERRY USED
TO BE HIS
BEST FRIEND.

BUT NO MORE.

SINCE COMING
BACK FROM THE
DEAD AS A
HELLSPAWN, AL
HAS DISCOVERED
HIS FRIEND'S
TRUE SIDE.

THAT OF A
TRAITOR.

TERRY STOLE HIS
WIFE FROM HIM.
GAVE HER THE
CHILD HE NEVER
COULD. PROTECTED
THE MAN WHO
ORDERED HIS DEATH.

WHY SHOULD
HE HELP HIM--
ESPECIALLY
NOW, WHEN
HIS SYMBIOTE
IS BEHAVING
SO ERRATICALLY.

COG TOLD HIM TO RELAX.
NOT USE HIS POWERS.

AND HE WON'T.
NOT FOR HIM.
HE'S NOT WORTH
GOING TO HELL FOR.

SO WHY DID
HE COME?

TO GLOAT?

AND WHY DID
HE SAVE TERRY
AWHILE BACK? *

MAYBE HE DID WANT
TO HELP... BUT NOT
TO THE EXTENT OF
MAKING THAT KIND OF
SACRIFICE. NOT FOR
TERRY.

CONFUSED,
HE LEAVES.

SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT. SHE COULD TELL. THE NURSES HAD GENERALLY BEEN QUITE FRIENDLY.

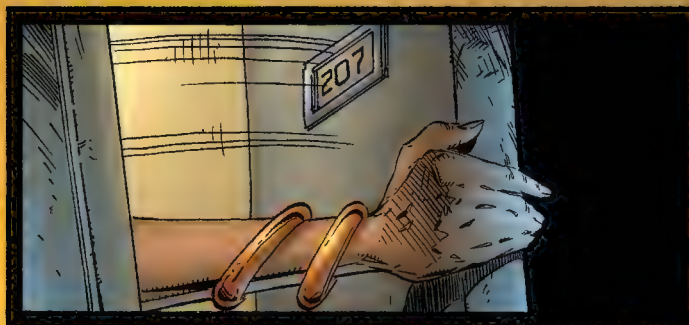
WHY WERE THEY LOOKING AWAY FROM HER-- AVOIDING EYE CONTACT?

ELAINE...? IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

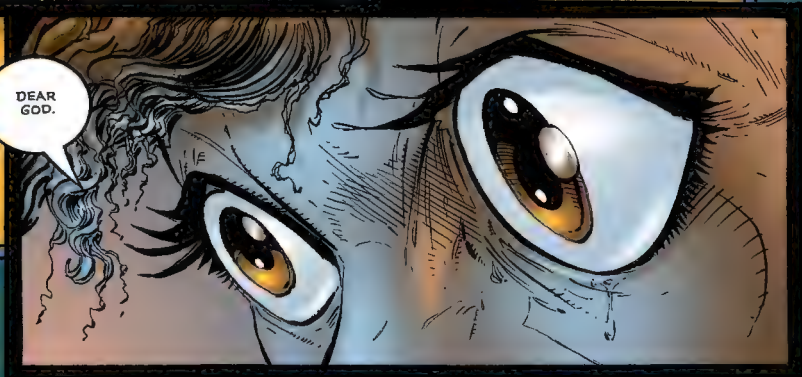
IT CAME SO FAST, WANDA. WE COULDN'T STOP IT. BY THE TIME DR. CURTIS GOT TO HIM...

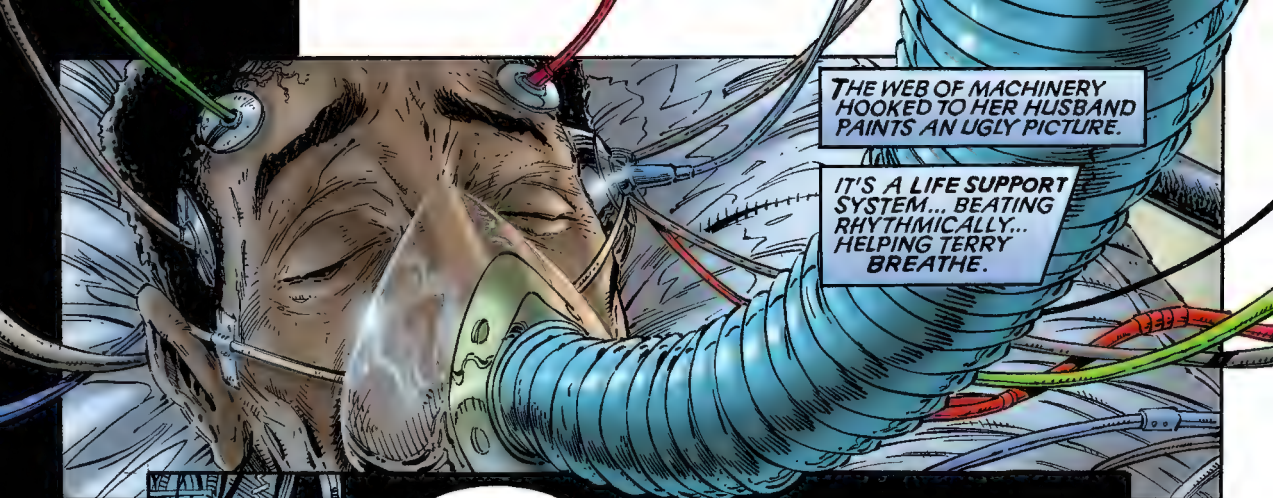
NO.

NO!



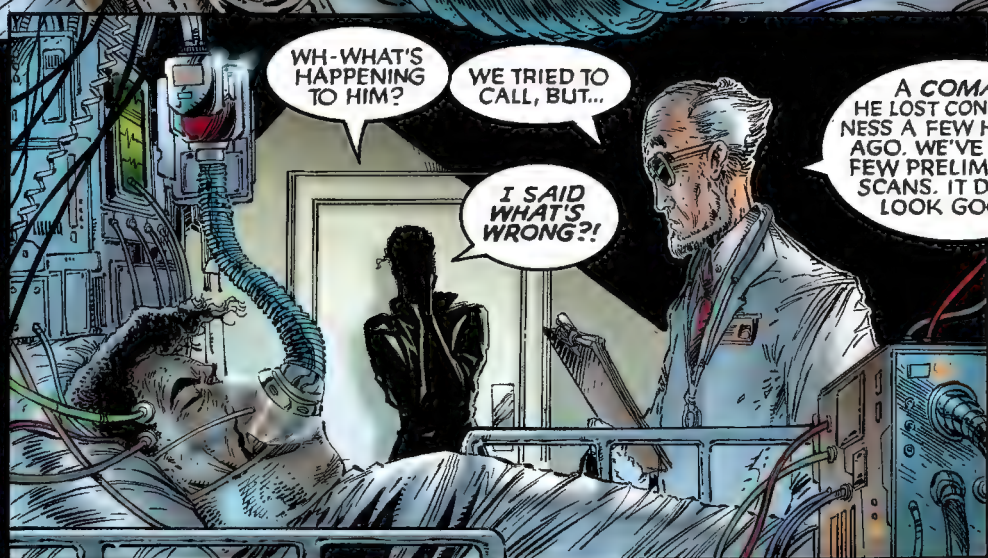
DEAR GOD.





THE WEB OF MACHINERY
HOOKED TO HER HUSBAND
PAINTS AN UGLY PICTURE.

IT'S A LIFE SUPPORT
SYSTEM... BEATING
RHYTHMICALLY...
HELPING TERRY
BREATHE.



WH-WHAT'S
HAPPENING
TO HIM?

WE TRIED TO
CALL, BUT...

I SAID
WHAT'S
WRONG?!

A COMA.
HE LOST CONSCIOUS-
NESS A FEW HOURS
AGO. WE'VE RUN A
FEW PRELIMINARY
SCANS. IT DOESN'T
LOOK GOOD.

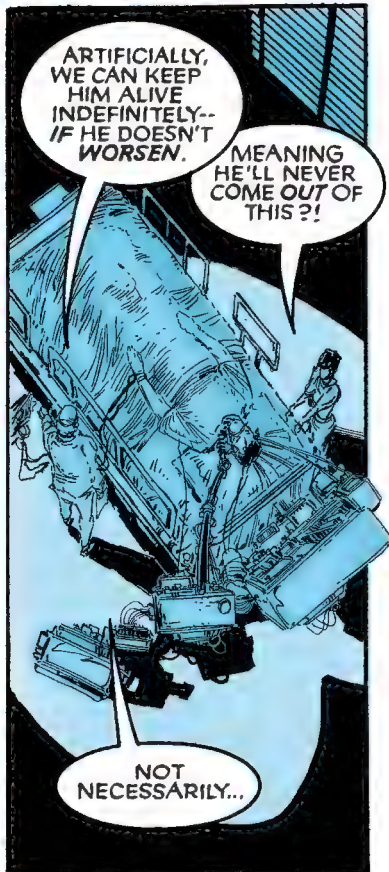


THERE'S BEEN
EXTENSIVE
BRAIN
DAMAGE. HE
CAN'T EVEN
BREATHE
ON HIS
OWN.



PARTS OF HIS
BRAIN HAVE SHUT
DOWN, HAVE STOPPED
SENDING CERTAIN
MESSAGES. THERE WAS
A LACK OF OXYGEN UP
THERE FOR OVER TWO
MINUTES, WHICH
CAUSED MOST OF
THE DAMAGE.

I'M TRULY SORRY,
MS. BLAKE, BUT AT THIS
POINT THERE'S VERY
LITTLE WE CAN DO.



ARTIFICIALLY,
WE CAN KEEP
HIM ALIVE
INDEFINITELY--
IF HE DOESN'T
WORSEN.

MEANING
HE'LL NEVER
COME OUT OF
THIS?!

NOT
NECESSARILY...

"... BUT THE CHANCE FOR ANY **NORMALITY** IS GONE. IF HE DOES WAKE FROM THIS, HE WON'T BE THE SAME. EXPECT LIMITED MOTOR FUNCTIONS, IF NOT **PARALYSIS**. HE WON'T KNOW HIS OWN NAME.

"THAT'S NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE **CANCER**, WHICH WE CAN'T STOP. I'M SORRY, MS. BLAKE. I WISH I COULD BE MORE HOPEFUL."

"IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, DOCTOR. CAN I... CAN I BE **ALONE** WITH HIM, PLEASE."

AS THE DAYS PASS, MORE DETAILS BECOME CLEAR.

THE SAD PROGNOSIS DOES NOT CHANGE.


TERRY WON'T SEE HIS DAUGHTER GROW INTO A WOMAN.

CYAN WON'T EVER BOUNCE ON HER DADDY'S KNEE AGAIN.

AND WORSE-- CYAN MIGHT NOT EVEN REMEMBER HER FATHER WHEN SHE'S OLDER.

"OF COURSE."

AS FOR WANDA, SHE'LL NOT HAVE THE CHANCE TO GROW OLD WITH A MAN SHE SO DESPERATELY LOVES.



AT THE TENDER AGE OF TWENTY-NINE, WANDA SHOULD BE FULL OF LIFE, LOOKING FORWARD TO EACH NEW DAY AND ITS ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.

NOT ANYMORE. FOR THE SECOND TIME, SHE WILL OUTLIVE HER HUSBAND -- ONE, KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY FIVE YEARS AGO, AND NOW ANOTHER, BEING EATEN ALIVE BY CANCER.

SO SHE RETREATS INWARD, SHUTTING HERSELF OFF FROM EVERYTHING. EVERYONE. IT'S THE ONLY WAY SHE HAS TO HANDLE HER PAIN:

... TO BECOME COMPLETELY NUMB TO IT ALL.

JUST LIKE HIM. HE'S LOST THE PRECIOUS THINGS, TOO.

HE TORTURES HIMSELF CONSTANTLY WITH HIS UNREALISTIC HOPES THAT HE CAN GET HER BACK AGAIN.

IT'S ALL
THAT'S LEFT.
FALSE HOPE.

AND A LOVE
THAT'S
NEVER WANED.

THAT LOVE
IS TO BECOME
A CURSE.

FOREVER.

HE STILL
REMEMBERS
THE TEARS
IN HER EYES,
AND THE
LOVE SHE
GAVE HIM.

THE ONE
WORD
CONTINUES TO
HAUNT HIM.
FOREVER.

FOREVER.


BECAUSE HE'D
PROMISED HER,
ON THEIR
HONEYMOON, TO
ALWAYS KEEP
HER HAPPY.

FOREVER.

I PROMISED
YOU, WANDA.

EVEN IF IT COSTS
HIM ALL HIS
REMAINING HOPE.

AS THE FIRST
JOLT IS
UNLEASHED, HE
TELLS HIMSELF
THIS ISN'T ABOUT
TERRY. IT'S
ABOUT WANDA.



TERRY'S BODY
ARCHES AGAINST
THE PAIN. A
SPASTIC FINGER
CATCHES THE
LACING THAT
HOLDS
SPAWN'S
FACE TO-
GETHER.




SPAWN BARELY
NOTICES.



HE'S
THINKING
ABOUT
HIS
LIFE.



HIS WIFE.



THEY'LL NEVER BE
TOGETHER AGAIN,
SO ALL THAT
MATTERS IS HER
HAPPINESS-- AND
HIS PROMISE.

IT'S TIME HE
LET HER GO.

AL?

I
USED
TO BE.

HE HESITATES,
THEN HEARS THE
WORD AGAIN:

FOREVER!

THEN HE'S GONE...
VANISHED TO GOD
ONLY KNOWS WHERE.



uh...?



THOSE
SCREAMS...?!

OK, NO!
I'VE GOT A
FLAT LINE IN
ROOM 207!

CODE
BLUE!

ELAINE,
GRAB A
CRASH CART
AND COME
WITH ME--
STAT!



THEY'VE BEEN
TRAINED FOR
EVERY SITUATION
POSSIBLE,
THESE NURSES.

OR SO
THEY
THINK.

HELP!!

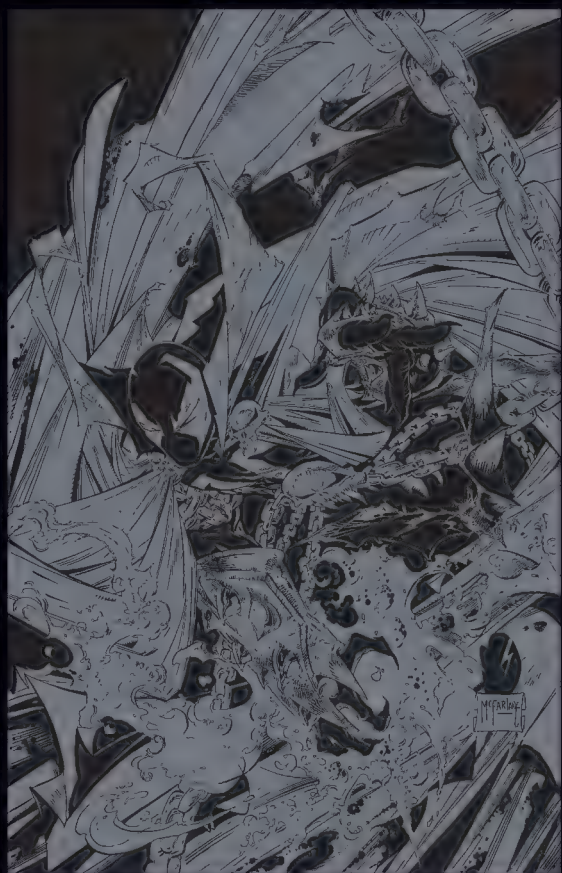


PLEASE, CAN
SOMEBODY
HELP MY
WIFE...?

I THINK
SHE'S
FAINTED.

THE STAFF
WILL SEARCH
FOR ANSWERS
TO THIS
MIRACULOUS
EVENT.

THEY
WON'T FIND
ANY CLUES.



PART 2





DESTINY.

SOME BELIEVE THAT, FROM THEIR FIRST MOMENT OF EXISTENCE, LIFE AS THEY KNOW IT HAS BEEN PREORDAINED. THAT ETERNITY IS CONTROLLED BY FORCES TOO GREAT FOR HUMANS TO EVER UNDERSTAND.

**THEY ARE
WRONG.**

WE THINK AS WE DO, ACT AS WE DO AS A RESULT OF WHAT LIES WITHIN. A SEED HAS BEEN PLANTED IN EACH OF US. HOW IT WILL GROW DEPENDS ON THE INDIVIDUAL.

THE SEED IS CALLED A SOUL.

THOUGH THE BODY EVENTUALLY DIES, THE SOUL MOVES ON. ITS ESSENCE IS THE TRUE VALUE OF EACH OF US, AN ESSENCE MEASURED BY THE SOUL'S ORIGINAL POTENTIAL AND ITS RESULTING CONDITION AFTER A LIFETIME OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE.

THAT VALUE IS WHAT THE LORDS OF THE AFTERLIFE ARE MOST INTERESTED IN.


AT DEATH, EACH BEING MAKES THE SAME VOYAGE,
WITH FRAGMENTED MEMORIES SPINNING IN THE VOID.
THOSE SCATTERED IMPRESSIONS SHINE LIKE BEACONS,
SENDING AN UNDOCTORED RESUME OF
THAT INDIVIDUAL.

IT'S FROM THIS
INFORMATION THAT
WE ARE DEALT OUR
FINAL JUDGMENT.
OUR DESTINY.

THERE ARE ONLY
TWO POSSIBLE
OUTCOMES.
HEAVEN
OR HELL.

BY THIS POINT, WE ARE
LOOKED UPON, NOT AS
WHAT WE WERE AT
DEATH, BUT AS WHAT
WE MAY YET BECOME.

IN TERMS
OF BOTH
GOOD AND
EVIL.



WITH HEAVEN AND HELL
ALTERNATING CHOICES
FROM AN ENDLESS POOL
OF HUMANITY.

THE PICKS ARE BASED ON
PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS.
GETTING TO HEAVEN DOES NOT
INDICATE A SPIRIT'S 'GOODNESS'
ANY MORE THAN A SENTENCE
TO HELL MEANS THERE IS AN
'EVILNESS.'

SOMETIMES THE DECISION
IS MADE STRICTLY TO
PREVENT THE OTHER SIDE
FROM ACQUIRING ANOTHER
VALUABLE PROPERTY.

IT'S UP TO GOD-- OR
SATAN-- TO EXPLOIT
EACH INDIVIDUAL'S
STRENGTHS...

...OR
WEAKNESSES.

FOR HELL, THE
TWO EASIEST
ARE ALWAYS
REVENGE OR
LOVE.

IT'S THE LATTER
THAT DAMNED
AL SIMMONS.

DEEP IN MANHATTAN'S
BOWERY, IT STIRS...

ZZZZ

... DREAMING OF
WHAT MIGHT
HAVE BEEN AND
WHAT MIGHT
YET BE...

... IF THE
BALANCE
OF THINGS
WERE TO
SLIP
EVER SO
SLIGHTLY.

Uk...?

WHAT?!

IT TAKES A
FEW SECONDS
FOR THE
FACTS TO
GARNER A
RESPONSE.

HOLY
HERPE!

HE'S
GONE!

MEOWW!

AND HE
DID IT TO
HIMSELF...
THE
DOOFUS!

FOR MONTHS NOW, THE
CLOWN HAS BEEN TRYING TO
PROVE TO HIS HELLISH FORMER
MASTER THAT THE NEW SPAWN,
LIKE ALL THE OTHERS, IS
UNWORTHY OF SUCH VAST
POWER.

THE PROPER
LEADERS OF
HELL'S ARMY, HE
CONTENDS, ARE
THOSE BORN AND
BRED IN THE
BLACK ABYSS.

NOW, HIS POINT
HAS BEEN
VALIDATED.

FOR CENTURIES THIS CREATURE, ONCE HONORED WITH THE TASK OF CHAPERONING EACH OF MALEBOLGIA'S NEW HELLSPAWN, HAS DREAMT OF THIS MOMENT.

FROLICKING WITH SOILED DISCARDS AND ROTTED GARBAGE, HIS CELEBRATION REACHES FEVER PITCH.

THEN COMES A THOUGHT--

--AND WITH IT, THE LOSS OF ANY JOY.

WAIT A MINUTE!

SIMMONS IS BACK IN HELL, BUT

I DIDN'T PUT HIM THERE! HE SCREWED HIMSELF UP, LIKE A LOT OF THE OTHERS DID.

SO MALEBOLGIA WILL JUST FIND ANOTHER IN A CENTURY OR TWO.

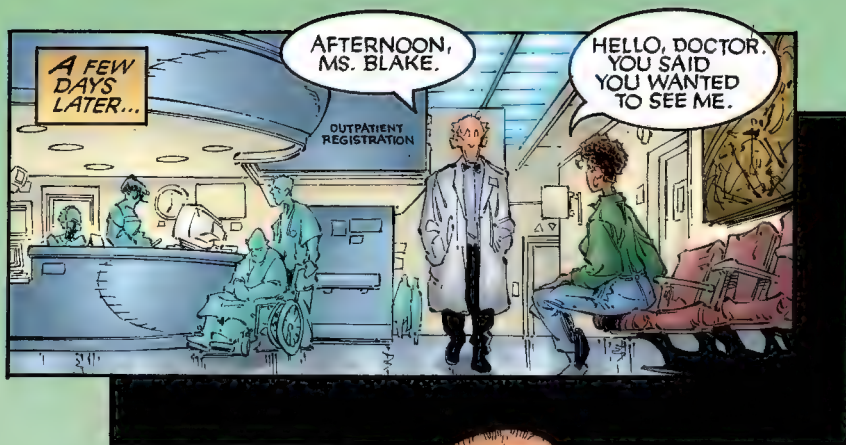
CRAP.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED. HE NEEDS TO SEE THAT NO HUMAN SHOULD BE CHOSEN EVER AGAIN.

IT'S HIS OWN CHILDREN WHO SHOULD LEAD. WE ARE THE TRUE EVIL.

I NEED TO PROVE THAT TO HIM, ONCE AND FOR ALL...

...AND I KNOW JUST WHERE TO START.



AFTERNOON,
MS. BLAKE.

HELLO, DOCTOR.
YOU SAID
YOU WANTED
TO SEE ME.

YES. I JUST RECEIVED
THE RESULTS OF THE LATEST
TESTS. AND TO BE QUITE
HONEST, THIS WHOLE SITUA-
TION HAS EVERYONE
COMPLETELY STUMPED.

THERE'S NO MORE
EVIDENCE OF CANCER
ANYWHERE IN HIS BODY.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE
AREA OF HIS HEAD WHICH
WAS AFFECTED IS
CLEANER THAN NORMAL.
WE'VE RUN EVERY DIAG-
NOSTIC I CAN THINK
OF. EACH RESULT
IS NEGATIVE.

SO
WHAT
DOES
THAT
MEAN?

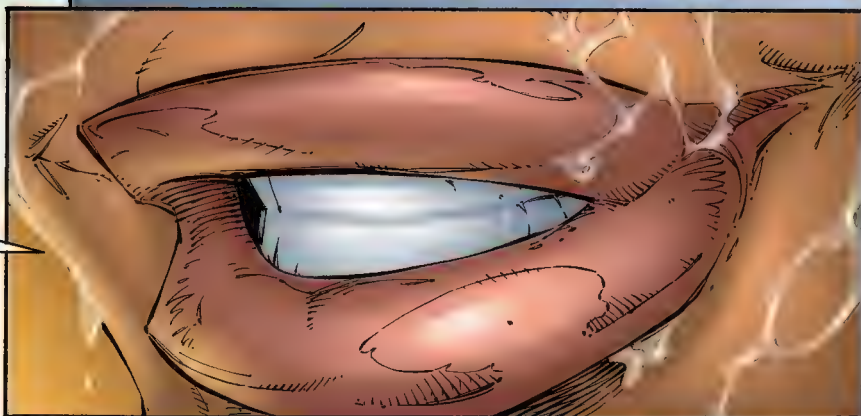


CALL IT A
MIRACLE, BUT TERRY
IS 100% CURED. SO,
UNLESS EITHER ONE
OF YOU HAS ANY
OBJECTIONS...

... I'M
RELEASING
HIM TOMORROW.
IT'S TIME HE WENT
HOME TO HIS
FAMILY.

THANK YOU,
DOCTOR. AND
IF YOU DON'T
MIND, I'D LIKE
TO TELL HIM
MYSELF.

OF
COURSE.



THE DRIVE HOME FOUND THEM WITH LITTLE TO SAY; AND, AS TERRY WIPE A FEW TEARS FROM HIS WIFE'S CHEEK, THE TWO OF THEM FELL SILENT. LOVING GLANCES SPOKE FOR THEM... OF AWE, AND RELIEF, AND THE CERTAINTY THAT BEING WITH EACH OTHER MEANS MORE THAN ANYTHING.

CYAN'S GOING TO BE SO HAPPY TO SEE HER DADDY BACK HOME.

JUST KNOWING I'LL GET TO SEE HER PRETTY FACE AS SHE GROWS UP-- AND YOURS AS WE GROW OLDER-- MAKES ANYTHING I'LL HAVE TO BEAR FROM NOW ON SEEM EASY.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW GOOD SHE BEHAVED AT THE HOSPITAL EACH TIME. SHE SURE...

CLICK

SURPRISE!!

FRIENDS.

A THRONG OF PEOPLE WHO NEVER BELIEVED A WORD OF THE MURDER ACCUSATIONS GATHER NOW TO WELCOME HIM HOME.

TERRY LOOKS AT EACH OF THEM AND SMILES. HE'LL NEVER AGAIN TAKE TRUE FRIENDSHIP FOR GRANTED.

TERRY GOES ON GRINNING BROADLY FOR THE REST OF THE EVENING.

HE MAKES SURE CYAN DOESN'T FEEL FORGOTTEN BY RIDING HER ON HIS SHOULDERS MOST OF THE TIME.

AND EVEN WHILE INVOLVED IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EVERYONE IN REACH, HE CAN'T SEEM TO STOP GAZING AT JUST ONE SIGHT-- HIS WIFE.

HOURS LATER, HE FALLS INTO A DEEP SLEEP. BEING IN HIS OWN BED BRINGS A CERTAIN COMFORT: THE SECURITY TO RELAX.

AND DREAM ABOUT PEOPLE AND THINGS.

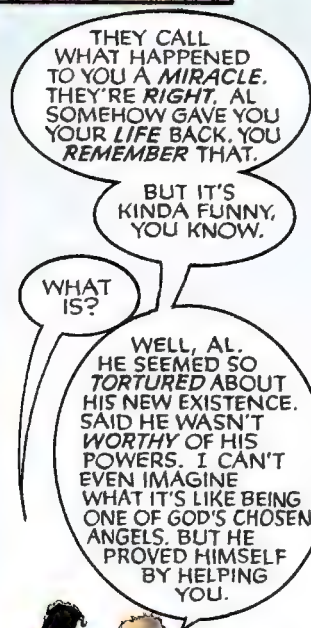
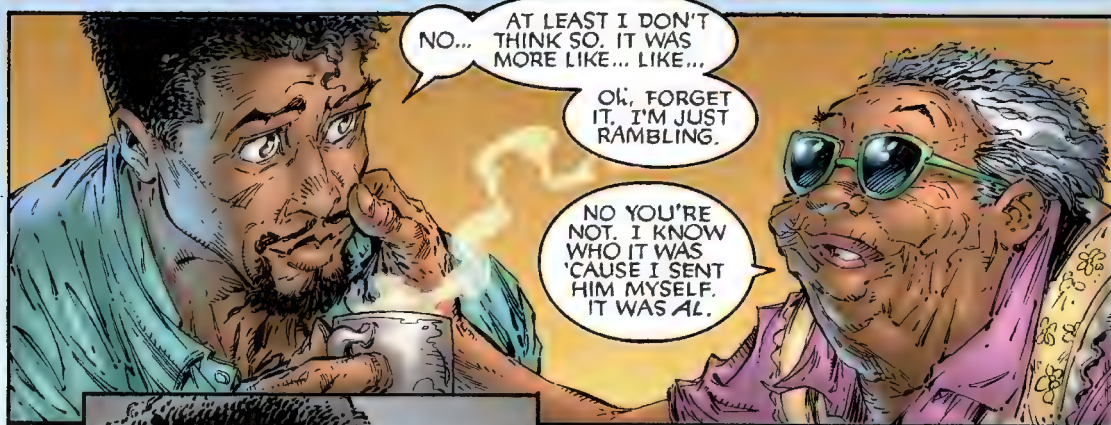
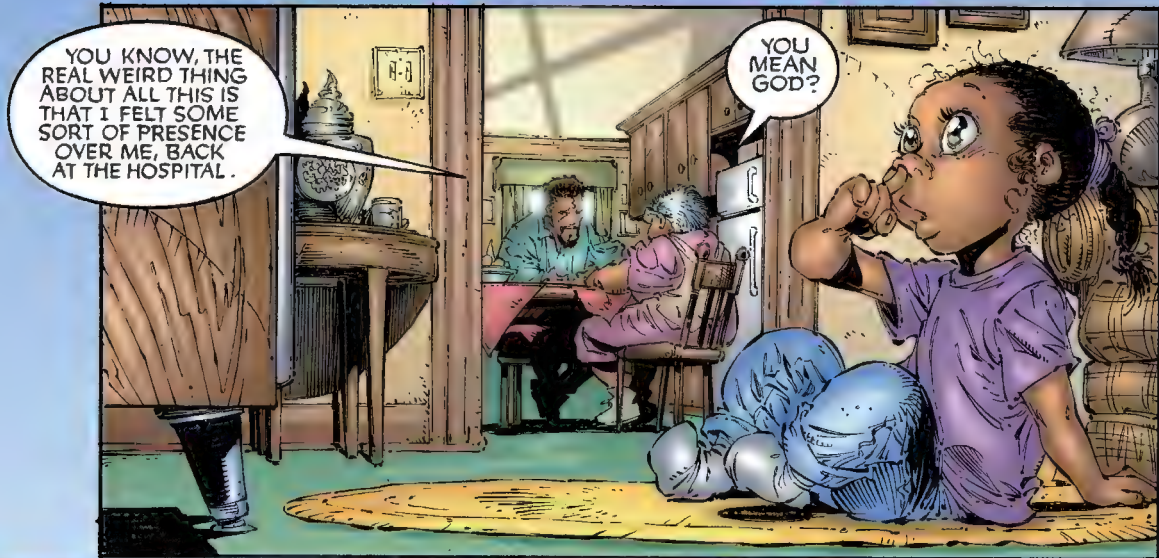
THINGS HAUNTING.


THINGS FAMILIAR.

AL.

THE DREAM REPEATS ITSELF, OVER AND OVER.







WITH ALL CONCEPT OF
TIME OBLITERATED,
SPAWN'S ETHEREAL
PRESENCE BREAKS
THE BLACK VEIL.

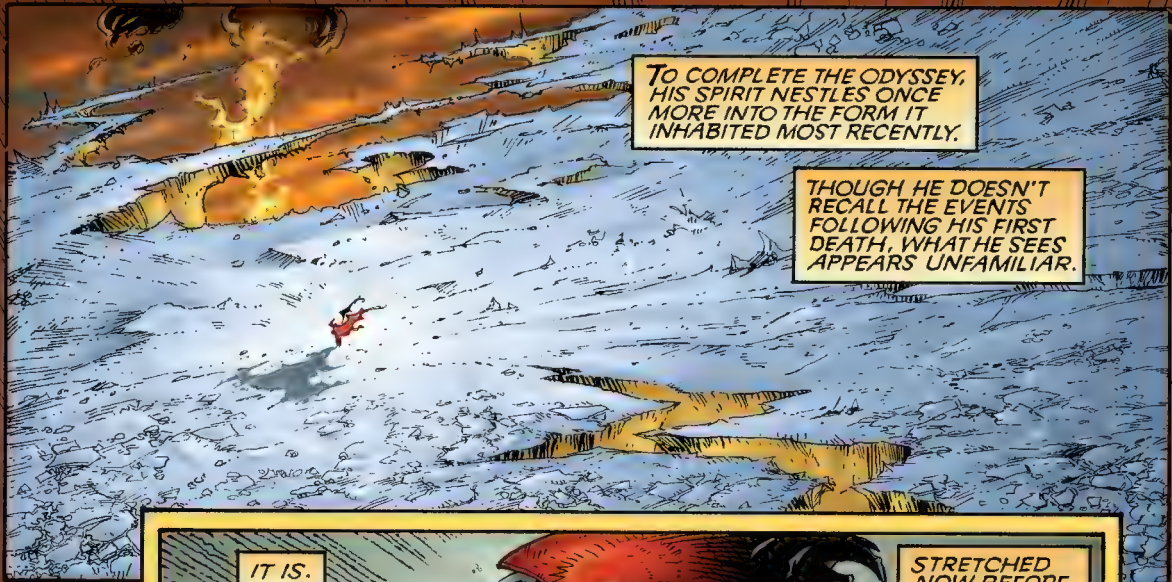
A YEAR?
A DAY?
A SECOND?

NO ONE KNOWS HOW MUCH
TIME THE SOUL'S TRANSITION
TAKES, BUT DEATH MAKES IT
INEVITABLE.

AT THAT POINT,
THERE IS ONE
RULE ADHERED
TO BY BOTH SIDES:

"THOSE SOULS WHO
SHALL RETURN TO THE
AFTERLIFE PAST THE
INITIAL ENTRY WILL FOR-
EVER BE REMANDED TO
THEIR FIRST LORD."

IN SHORT, SPAWN HAS
RETURNED TO HELL.




TO COMPLETE THE ODYSSEY,
HIS SPIRIT NESTLES ONCE
MORE INTO THE FORM IT
INHABITED MOST RECENTLY.

THOUGH HE DOESN'T
RECALL THE EVENTS
FOLLOWING HIS FIRST
DEATH, WHAT HE SEES
APPEARS UNFAMILIAR.




IT IS.

STRETCHED
NOW BEFORE
HIM IS A VAST
WASTELAND:
HELL'S
SECOND
LEVEL.



AS A FORMER
VISITOR TO
ANOTHER,
HIGHER LEVEL,
HIS PRESENCE
IS ACKNOWLEDGED
IMMEDIATELY;



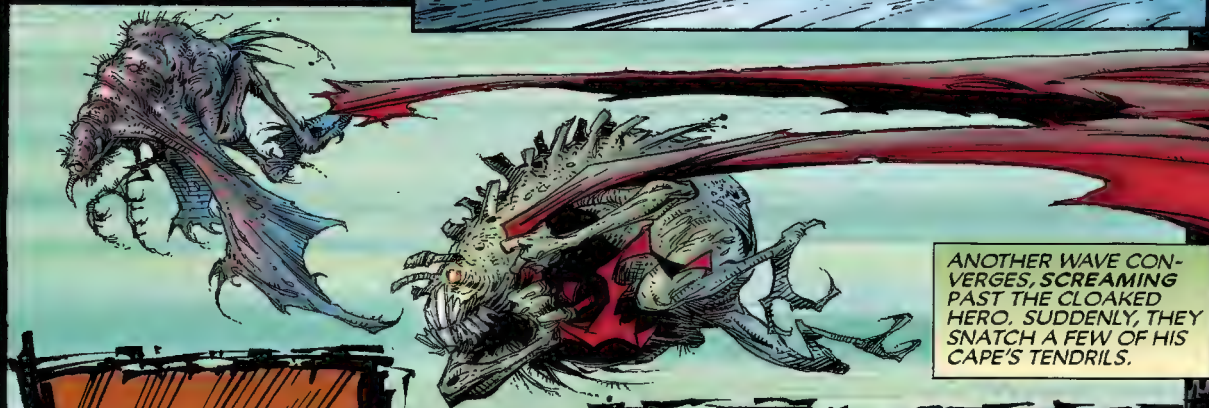
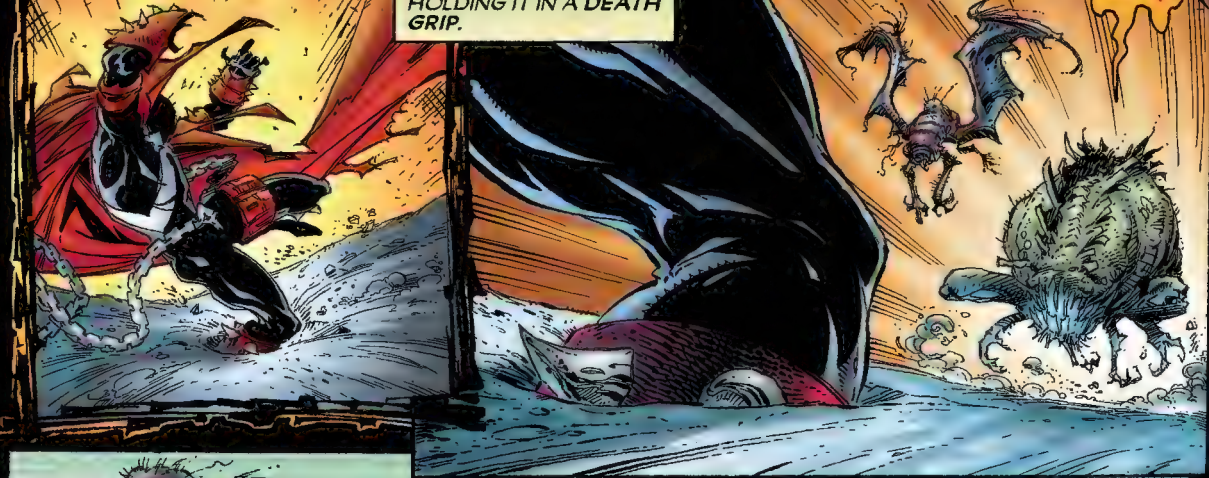
AN ENEMY HAS
TRESPASSED
IN THEIR
SACRED LANDS.

THEY APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE... GNATS... THAT GAPING WOUND IN HIS FACE, NO LONGER TIED SHUT, ALLOWS THEM TO DIG DEEPLY.

WHILE HE'S DISTRACTED, THE GROUND ITSELF JOINS THE FRAY, SWALLOWING ONE LEG AND HOLDING IT IN A DEATH GRIP.

IT'S ONLY THE START.

NEK-TORR

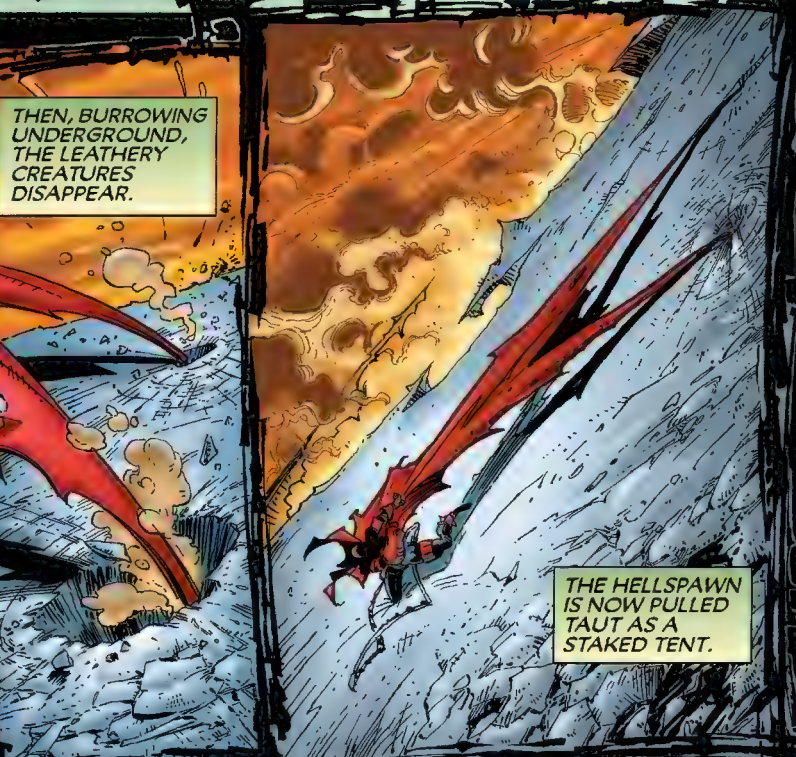


ANOTHER WAVE CONVERGES, SCREAMING PAST THE CLOAKED HERO. SUDDENLY, THEY SNATCH A FEW OF HIS CAPE'S TENDRILS.



THEIR ATTACK IS FAR FROM RANDOM, HE REALIZES.

THEN, BURROWING UNDERGROUND, THE LEATHERY CREATURES DISAPPEAR.



THE HELLSPAWN IS NOW PULLED TAUT AS A STAKED TENT.

INTRUDERS WILL
NOT BE PERMITTED--
EVEN THOSE FROM
OTHER LEVELS.

NEK-
TORR

NEK-
TORR

NEK-
TORR

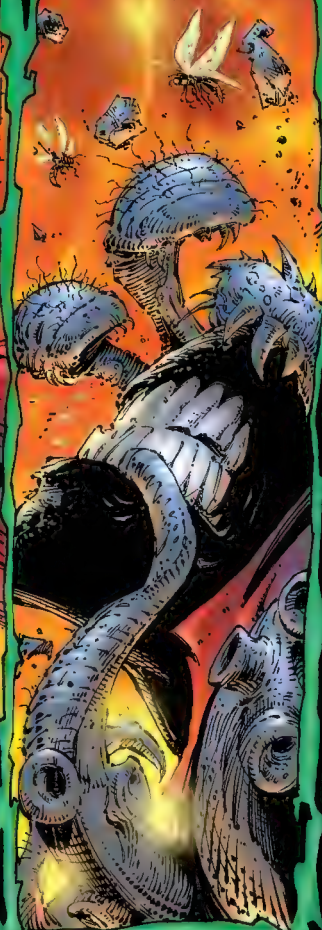
NEK-
TORR

NEK-
TORR

THE UNHOLY LAWS
REQUIRE THE
STRAINS REMAIN
PURE.

HYBRIDS WILL
ONLY DESTROY
THEIR UTOPIA.

YET, WITHOUT
THE HYBRIDS,
THEY CANNOT
LIVE.




AND SO, INTRUDERS THAT
HAVE TRIED TO CROSS THE
VOID INTO THE NEXT LEVEL
ARE PUT TO A PURPOSE
BEFORE THEY DIE THE
DEATH OF HELL.

NEK-
TORR

NEK-
TORR





INSANITY
SPIRALLING AROUND
HIM, SPAWN TRIES
TO KEEP A GRIP,
EVEN AS THE
WEIGHT OF THE
DEMON HORDE
PREPARES TO
SUFFOCATE HIM.

NEK-
TORR

THROUGH
THE CRACKS,
THE SMALL
ONES GET
THERE FIRST.

AS HIS
VISION BEGINS
TO BLUR, AL
SIMMONS
WONDERS WHAT
HE DID TO DESERVE
THIS FATE -- THIS
CURSE OF THE
SPAWN.

WAS IT THE
KILLINGS?

HE WAS ONLY
FOLLOWING
ORDERS,
HE THINKS.

TOTAL
DAMNATION
FOR ANY
MURDERER,
THAT'S WHAT
IT MUST BE.

THEY ARE
NOWHERE.
THEY ARE
EVERYWHERE.

FIGHTING EACH
OTHER FOR
POSITION.

SO HE GIVES IN
AND GOES LIMP,
JUST AS THE
PARCHED LAND
GOES BLACK.

NEK-
TORR?!

BUT HELL, LIKE HEAVEN, WAS NEVER MEANT FOR MAN TO UNDERSTAND.

IT'S A PLACE OF PAIN, HORROR, ANGUISH. FAR BEYOND ANYTHING POSSIBLE ON EARTH.

NEK-TORR
MEEEE!

YET, AS ON EARTH, A PECKING ORDER HAS EVOLVED--ONE PREDICATED ON SIZE. NOT SURPRISINGLY, RESENTMENT EXISTS.

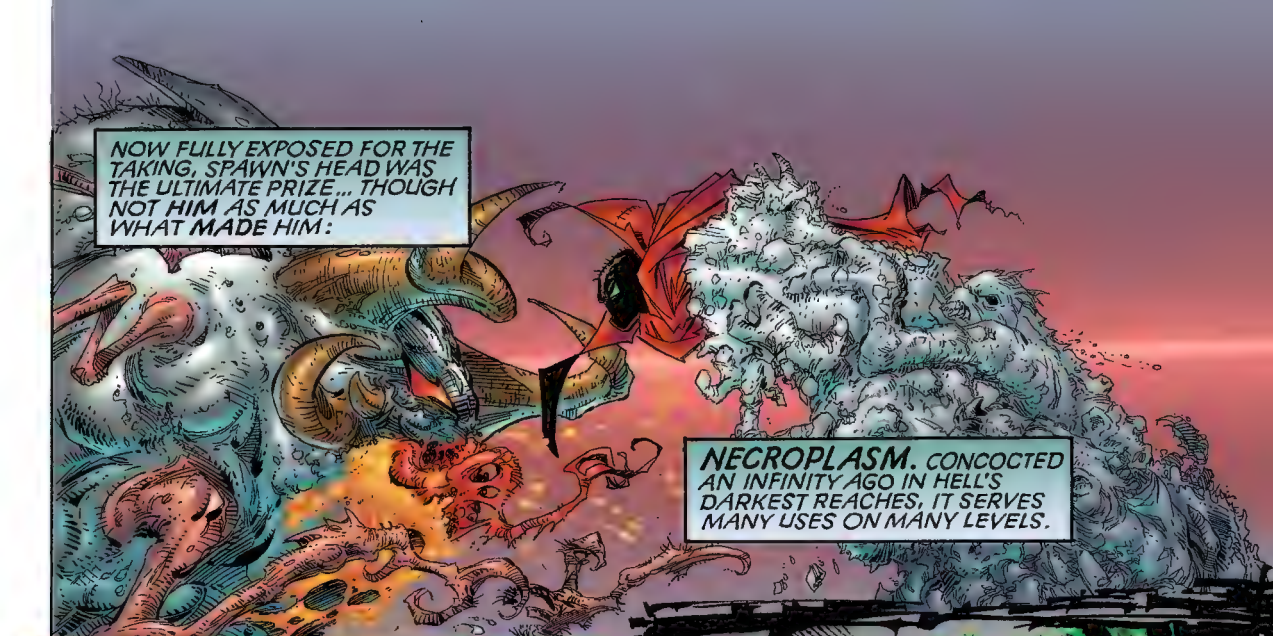
THEY FOUND HIM FIRST, THE SMALL ONES DID.

THEY'LL NOT LEAVE HIM BEHIND.

NEK-TORR!

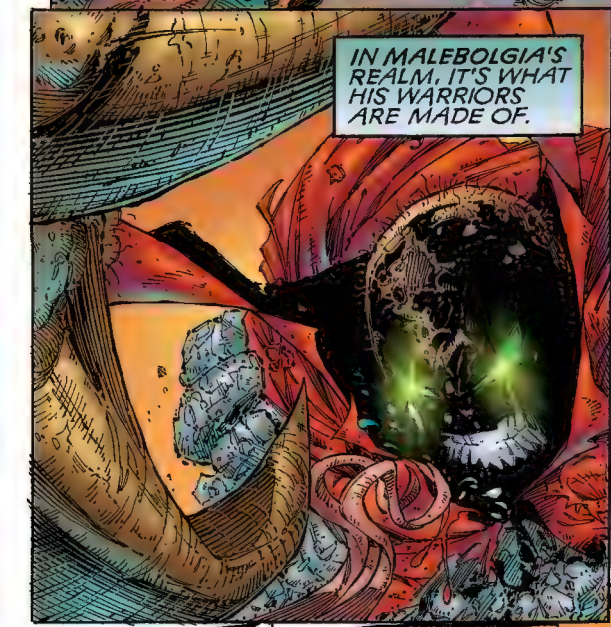
A PILLAR OF THEIR REMAINS PETRIFIES IN A HEART-BEAT...

...LEAVING JUST AN EXPOSED TIP.


A chaotic scene showing Spawn's head being consumed by a large, white, bubbling mass of Necroplasm. The background is a dark, stormy sky with a red and orange glow. Various demonic figures and skeletal remains are visible in the background.

NOW FULLY EXPOSED FOR THE TAKING, SPAWN'S HEAD WAS THE ULTIMATE PRIZE... THOUGH NOT HIM AS MUCH AS WHAT MADE HIM:

NECROPLASM, CONCOCTED AN INFINITY AGO IN HELL'S DARKEST REACHES, IT SERVES MANY USES ON MANY LEVELS.

A close-up of a warrior's face, which is a dark, skeletal mask with glowing green eyes. The warrior is wearing a red and black hooded garment. The background is a dark, textured surface.

IN MALEBOLGIA'S REALM, IT'S WHAT HIS WARRIORS ARE MADE OF.

A close-up of a mouth with sharp, white teeth and a green, fleshy interior. The mouth is open, showing the teeth and the green interior. The background is a dark, textured surface.

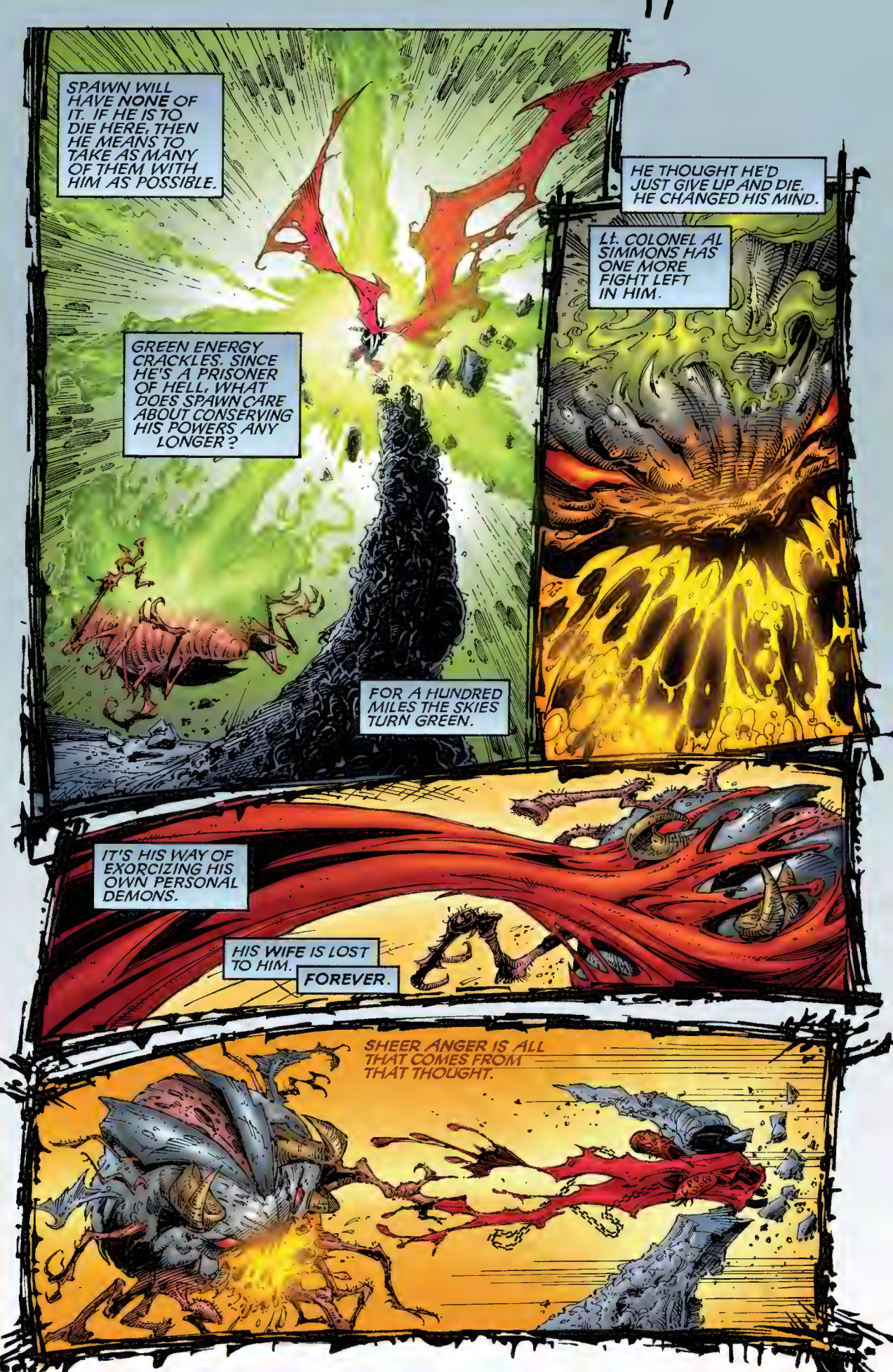
BUT HERE, THE PLASM HAS ANOTHER PURPOSE: FOOD. WITHOUT TRESPASSERS TO FEAST ON, THE INHABITANTS WOULD HAVE PERISHED LONG AGO.

A large, skeletal hand holding a long, curved blade. The hand is made of bone and has a green, fleshy interior. The background is a dark, textured surface.

SO, EACH VICTIM BECAME THEIR VITAL NOURISHMENT.

THEIR CALORIES.
THEIR JUICES.

THEIR SWEET
NECTAR.



SPAWN WILL
HAVE NONE OF
IT. IF HE IS TO
DIE HERE, THEN
HE MEANS TO
TAKE AS MANY
OF THEM WITH
HIM AS POSSIBLE.

HE THOUGHT HE'D
JUST GIVE UP AND DIE.
HE CHANGED HIS MIND.

LT. COLONEL AL
SIMMONS HAS
ONE MORE
FIGHT LEFT
IN HIM.

GREEN ENERGY
CRACKLES. SINCE
HE'S A PRISONER
OF HELL, WHAT
DOES SPAWN CARE
ABOUT CONSERVING
HIS POWERS ANY
LONGER?

FOR A HUNDRED
MILES THE SKIES
TURN GREEN.

IT'S HIS WAY OF
EXORCIZING HIS
OWN PERSONAL
DEMONS.

HIS WIFE IS LOST
TO HIM.

FOREVER.

SHEER ANGER IS ALL
THAT COMES FROM
THAT THOUGHT.




PREPARE,
DEMON, TO EAT
YOUR **HEART!**

ADRENALINE
IS TRIGGERED.


RELEASING
ONCE AGAIN
THE TRUE SPIRIT
OF THE WARRIOR.

BRACED AGAINST
PETRIFIED DEBRIS,
HE STANDS READY
FOR ATTACK.



FOOD. THAT'S ALL SPAWN IS TO THE CHARGING MONSTROSITY.

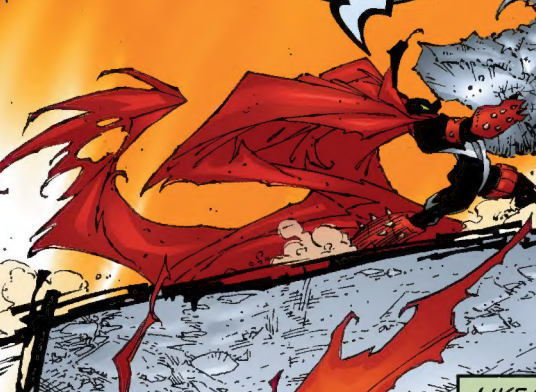
SOMETHING TO FEED ITS CRAVINGS. NO MATTER THE SOURCE.



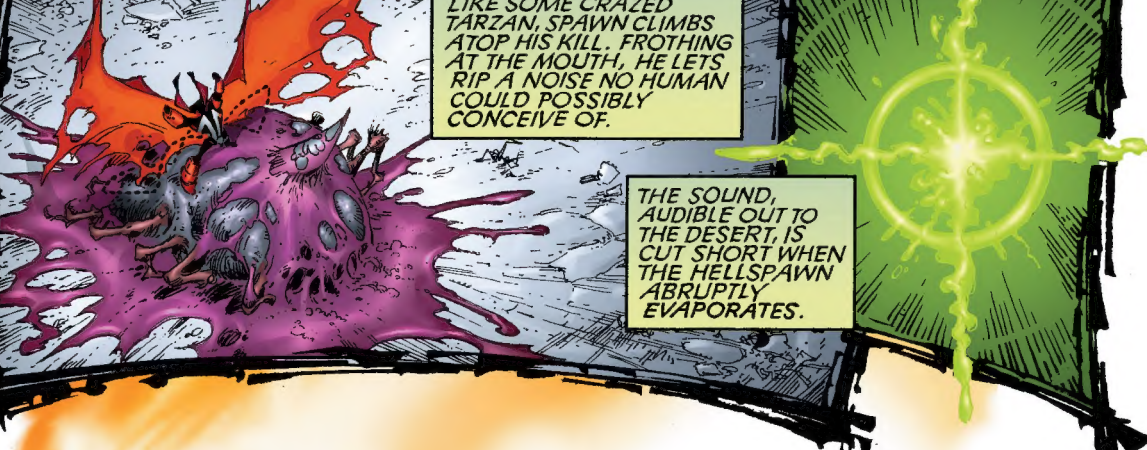
ITS OWN SLAVES OFTEN FILL THE BILL.

IF YOU'RE SO GODDAMNED HUNGRY...

...CHOKE ON THIS!



LIKE SOME CRAZED TARZAN, SPAWN CLIMBS ATOP HIS KILL. FROTHING AT THE MOUTH, HE LETS RIP A NOISE NO HUMAN COULD POSSIBLY CONCEIVE OF.



THE SOUND, AUDIBLE OUT TO THE DESERT, IS CUT SHORT WHEN THE HELLSPAWN ABRUPTLY EVAPORATES.

ELSEWHERE
IN TIME...

Perfect!

It went just as
I'd planned. My
little Spawn has
just picked up
the first of his
new gifts.

Unknowingly,
of course.

A few
more pieces
and my 'Grim
Reaper' will be
ready. Enjoy
your next level,
Simmons.

C'MON,
HONEY!
TIME TO GO
HOME. THANK
MEGAN FOR
INVITING
YOU TO HER
PARTY.

BALLOON!
BALLOON!

OKAY,
GO GRAB
ONE.

THERE
YOU ARE,
DEAR,
SWEET
CYAN.

YOU'RE FUNNY.

THANK
YOU.

BYE-BYE.
I'LL SEE YOU
SOON.

Hee hee
hee hee
hee hee
hee hee





Tyrant
Lizard
King

EMPIRE